

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 898

Introduced by Assembly Member Napolitano

February 27, 1997

An act to add Section 15364.56 to the Government Code, relating to tourism.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 898, as introduced, Napolitano. Tourism: commemoration of Japanese fishing community.

Existing law establishes the Office of Tourism within the Trade and Commerce Agency. Under existing law, a California Welcome Center may be designated according to conditions established by the Office of Tourism, and a state historical landmark may be designated pursuant to procedures and criteria established by the State Historical Resources Commission. The existing Tourism Policy Act includes among its purposes encouragement of the preservation and use of California historic and scenic environments to enhance California's appeal as a destination for domestic and international tourism.

This bill would make findings and declarations relating to the fishing community known as Fish Harbor, which was occupied by Japanese-American fishermen prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor, at which time its residents were removed to internment camps. The bill would require the Office of Tourism to establish a fund for the creation of a Japanese-American Fishing Village Memorial Visitors Center, to be located at Terminal Island, at Worldport Los Angeles,

and would declare legislative intent that a minimum of \$25,000 shall be made available from the General Fund for this purpose, contingent upon receipt of the same amount from private sources. The bill would also direct the Port of Los Angeles to make every effort to be designated a California Welcome Center, and a state historical landmark, as specified.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes. State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares as
2 follows:

3 (a) In 1901, former fishermen from Japan formed a
4 community near San Pedro.

5 (b) In 1905, they settled on Terminal Island. This was
6 a fishing community, known at the time as Fish Harbor.

7 (c) The community grew and prospered until it
8 numbered nearly 3,000 Japanese-American fishermen,
9 fish-cannery workers, merchants, and residents at its
10 peak.

11 (d) By the 1930s there were at least eight canneries,
12 commercial and naval shipyards, oil tanks, steamship
13 berths, 60 stores and shops, an elementary school, a
14 Baptist mission, a Shinto shrine and a Buddhist temple.

15 (e) After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, rumors began
16 to circulate that the village on Fish Harbor was a spy
17 colony, and as a result all people of Japanese descent,
18 including American citizens, were evicted from the
19 island at gunpoint on February 25, 1942.

20 (f) With only 48 hours notice, the Japanese-American
21 residents of Terminal Island were sent for internment in
22 concentration camps in a remote and barren mountain
23 area, with only the possessions they could carry with
24 them.

25 (g) While the residents were imprisoned in
26 internment camps for the next four years, their homes
27 were looted, then bulldozed, their fishing boats were
28 repossessed or stolen, and their fishing nets rotted.



1 (h) Terminal Island was later turned into a military
2 base, and the fishing village was never rebuilt.

3 (i) Today, there are still 778 paying members of the
4 Terminal Islanders Club that continue to hold annual
5 reunions around Los Angeles County.

6 (j) The Japanese-American National Museum in Los
7 Angeles held a very popular exhibition in 1994 called “An
8 Island in Time: The Terminal Island Story,” and this
9 exhibition highlighted the Fish Harbor community and
10 the innovations in fishing that the Japanese-Americans
11 contributed to the industry.

12 (k) The California Tourism Policy Act encourages
13 “the preservation and use of California Historic and
14 Scenic environments to enhance the State’s appeal as a
15 destination for domestic and international tourism.”

16 SEC. 2. Section 15364.56 is added to the Government
17 Code, to read:

18 15364.56. (a) (1) The Office of Tourism shall
19 establish a fund for the creation of a Japanese-American
20 Fishing Village Memorial Visitors Center, to be located at
21 Terminal Island, at Worldport Los Angeles.

22 (2) It is the intent of the Legislature that a minimum
23 of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) shall be made
24 available, when appropriated, from the General Fund for
25 purposes of this section, contingent on the receipt of a
26 minimum of matching funds generated from the private
27 sector.

28 (b) The Office of Tourism shall request, and the
29 Department of Transportation shall install and maintain,
30 a highway sign that identifies the location of the
31 Japanese-American Fishing Village Memorial Visitors
32 Center.

33 (c) (1) To the extent practicable and feasible, the
34 Port of Los Angeles shall make every effort to be
35 designated a California Welcome Center, pursuant to
36 Section 15334.3.

37 (2) To the extent practicable and feasible, the Port of
38 Los Angeles shall make every effort to be designated a
39 state historical landmark, pursuant to Article 2

1 (commencing with Section 5020) of Chapter 1 of Division
2 5 of the Public Resources Code.

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